

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE BILL

Depending, for Preventing

Occasional Conformity.

Humbly Offered by the People called Quakers.

IN the latter part of the Preamble of this Bill, it is declared, that the Act passed in the First Year of the Reign of King *William* and Queen *Mary*, Entituled, *An Act for Exempting their Majesties Protestant Subjects, Dissenting from the Church of England, from the Penalties of certain Laws, ought Inviolably to be Observed.* Which Noble Declaration, would give us Ground to hope that nothing is designed in this Bill, to Infringe the said Act of Exemption; yet in the Beginning of the Preamble and following Clauses of it, we have, as we humbly conceive, Reason to think the Liberty, given by the said Act, is made liable to a Doubtful Sense, if not Infringed.

First, The Term [*Truly*] in the Preamble, not being Limited in its acceptation, may be so construed, as to interfere with the Design of the Act for Exemption, which is therein declared to be to *Unite the Queen's Protestant Subjects, in Interest and Affection*; which good End, that Parliament did hope *Effectually* to obtain,

tain, by giving some Ease to *Scrupulous Consciences* in the Exercise of Religion, as therein appears, without leaving it to any Subordinate Magistrate, to determine what is, or is not *Truly Scrupulous*.

Secondly, It seemed meet to that Parliament, not to distinguish the Religious Assemblies, or Meetings of Protestant Dissenters, with the Term of *Conventicles*, as in this Bill, under which Term, by some former Laws, we have severely suffered.

Thirdly, To make any Person in Office, an Offender, and to forfeit his Office or Trust, with a Penalty, only for *Resorting to, or being Present* at any such Assembly as aforesaid, when the Occasion may be on the account of a Funeral, &c. we conceive, if Enacted, will not only infringe the Toleration, but render Illegal the Common Offices of Love and Humanity betwixt Friends and Relations, and not only to those, who do Occasionally Conform, but also to Constant Conformists.

Fourthly, That Act allows fundry Offices to be served by Deputy; this Bill makes no such Provision, except for Offices of Inheritance.

Fifthly, As we are Free-men of Corporations, and Members of Companies, by the Terms of Admission, we are bound to do in our Course the several Duties thereof; which by this Bill, we are not only rendered incapable of, but also subject to Fines and Penalties for not doing them.

Sixthly, The Words *Scandalous and Irreligious Practices*, used in this Bill, being in the Plural, seems to conclude the *Resorting to, or being Present* at the Religious Meetings of Protestant Dissenters, equally offensive with an Occasional receiving of the Sacrament, only for a Place of Profit, or Trust in the Government, which we hope is not intended; for that would carry

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an unmerited Reflection on Religious Assemblies, and is, as we conceive, not agreeable with the Act for Exemption.

Seventhly, we have never sought after any Place of Profit or Trust in the Government, and therefore pray that the Conscientious Liberty, which we thankfully Enjoy, and was granted by that Act, may be kept entire.

Lastly, As it is our Christian Principle to suffer for Conscience, so the same makes us plead for the Liberty of it, to all whose Morals and Obedience to the Government cannot Justly be questioned; and we conceive, restraining from *Proving all things*, in order to hold fast that which may be most conducing to future ^{1 Thes.} Happiness (the Chief End of *RELIGION*) is ^{5. 21.} opposite to the Apostle's Advice; And where such Restraint is, we cannot think the Toleration secure.

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